

# Mexican War Mormon Battalion 1846-1848



## **Brief History of the U.S. Mormon Battalion**

The need to assist the U. S. Army in the Mexican war was urgent [1846]. President James K. Polk instructed the Secretary of War, William L. March to authorize Col. (later General) Stephen W. Kearney, Commander of the Army of the West, to enlist a battalion of 500 Mormons for this purpose. Captain James Allen was ordered to proceed to the Mormon Camps in Iowa to recruit five companies of 75 to 100 men each.

The Mormons had many reasons to be reluctant to enlist: They had received no protection from persecution and mob action in Missouri and Illinois; their families were destitute and spread over a wide area; they had hundreds of miles of hostile Indian territory to cross; they worried how their families would suffer in the bitter plains winter; and of course, the Mormons had particularly close family ties and were concerned about protection for their families located on the western frontier.

However, President Brigham Young and the governing Council of the L.D.S. Church urged the men to enlist, telling them it was their patriotic duty to join. Five companies totaling over 500 men were mustered in at Council Bluffs, Iowa on July 16, 1846. There were 32 women, of which 20 were laundresses hired at private's pay, that left with the Battalion. They made the longest march in military history consisting of 2,000 miles from Council Bluffs, Iowa to San Diego, California.

In addition to the 500 men, some of the officers chose to take their families and their possessions and their own wagons at no expense to the government, which the Army permitted. There were 15 or 16 families, including 50 or 55 children and dependents, who left Council Bluffs with the Battalion.

**Wasatch County Veterans List**  
**MEXICAN WAR & MORMON BATTALION**  
**June 1846 2 February 1848**

Averett, Elisha  
Greer, James Camp  
Hanks, Ephraim Knowlton  
Palmer, Phoebe Draper  
Palmer, Zemira  
Sessions, Caroline Emeline  
Sessions, John  
Sessions, Richard  
Sessions, William Bradford